

[A Day at N. B. C. College]

[?] NYC

Swenson

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LIVING FOLKLORE

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Informant: Anna Saitta 509 East 79th Street, N.Y.C.

Subject: A DAY AT N. B. C. COLLEGE

(Taken from the diary of informant - dated February 28, 1928. Her own description of one day's experience as a packer in the Uneeda Bisquit Company (called N.B.C. College by the workers) - at Fifteenth St. and 9th, 10th and 11th Avenues, Manhattan.)

The mountains and planes were covered with snow. slowly I was approaching the hills, near me stood Mary, Slovak Mary my friend, we ate a piece of bread and told each other tales. The mountains were white, all white and the sun shone upon them bright, the trees looked like [faery?] kings with their glittering icy and snowy crown. Mary, Mary, Slovak Mary, sing me that song of Janosak, of Janosak the robber...

Cling, cling, clang... Damnit! again morning. Stop you accursed disturber of dreams, you tyrant alarm clock. Seven o'clock already, phooey what a life. What did I dream?

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No time to think of it. It's too late too late , hasten to work. I look around , my room is dark, fine it would be to sleep only a half an hour more. Why isn't' it midnight instead of

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morning? Of course eight hours spent in a factory are too much. Wash myself and look through the window. It rains again. Whenever I look through the window in the morning it's raining, snowing , or both at the same time.

I walk down the stairs, I walk through the streets to the sub station. In each shop window is a clock, and I look at every one, and every one shows a different time. By all the Prophets, what time is it?

At last arrived to the station, took out my nickel and deposited it with a melancholy look , in the box. Goodbye my nickel I'll never see you again. Clock, time? Seven-thirty. Maybe I'll have enough time to eat breakfast. Train is coming. Second Avenue elevated. Crowded. People lean on me, I lean on them. They look at me with wrath, I look at them with disgust. We all wish the others should get off, in order we could get a seat. I look around in the train. God, how many 3 people live on this earth. Too many, too many.

Mott Avenue. Some more people! A stout Jewish woman stands near me, leans on me, yawns and sighs. Oy, oy, my blood is boiling, I try to push her away, but she leans on me and I can't free myself. Finally I holler out: God's sake move away a little bit, or do you want to choke me? She looks at me, her eyes filled with hate, contempt and surprise. She want s want's to say something, but suddenly closes her lips. The colored man got up from his seat, she sits down. I am free to breath breathe, what a relief! Daily News, lies and crimes. World, positions, furnished rooms. Times, money. Daily Worker, so and so many workers out of employment. Times Square. Most of the people leave the subway, I have a seat. What's the use, on Fourteenth Street I must leave the train too.

Tired and painted faces walk to their shops. People coming out from the church, people entering the church. I wonder what they have to say to God.

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The factory. God [Moloch?], God Mamon, God Ignorance are sitting on the factory chimney. Blood , everywhere blood, they suck our blood, there isn't in our body blood anymore.

But the girls are gay [?????] We wear uniforms, white caps, and we all look alike. This is fat Mary, that is skinny Mary. Jewish Mary, Spanish Mary, Spanish Mary and Irish Rose. Hallo Mary, Hallo Rose, Hallo Katie. How are you? Fine, how are you? Feel alright. Smiles and greetings. We would say that we feel fine even if we had to drop dead after.

Forelady— March across, you'll work on the Ninth Avenue building today. It's raining, but we must go across the street. Jewish Mary walks with Irish Mary, Italian Mary with German Katie Fat Mary with lean Mary. And myself with Lithuanian Rose.

The working girls conversation. God, it rains again. Damn it, we have / to work every day on Eleventh Ave. Phooey, how everything stinks there. That's a factory? A toilet not a factory. No sun, no air, and cold! They want us to catch consumption. Of course they should worry. There are too many 5 people anyway. That inspectress, that bastard, I hope she drops dead. A girl/ I was working with yesterday, a new girl. Such a fresh kid, only a week in the factory— do you hear me Katie? So I told, so I say to her— You listen, I don't care whoever you are, you may mean to your mother all the world, but to me you are less than the air. By God, I'll punch you— Shut up, here comes the Foreman—

Two, four, six— thirty-six girls. Where to put them. Machine operators? No, we are packers. Packers, well well, follow me—

What did I tell you, I knew he will put us near the refrigerators. I had a bad dream last night, I saw dirty water. You are full of sh— Don't be so stupid. Are you your own grandmother? Who the devil believes today in dreams?

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My husband, oh he is a wonderful fellow, he makes fire in the stove, when I get up to go to work the room is warm. Believe me what a man. Yes, and then lays down and says, Dear wife, go to work and I'll watch the house—

Who, my Bobby? Oh you nut, my Bobby works hard. You 6 should see what a hard working man he is. My Bobby—

Dry up there, stop your babbling, less talking and more work. What the hell is this, a picnic or a factory.

What's your number? I wasn't talking. What's your number?, I said. Bertha was talking, she talks always. Will you give me your number, or I'll call the Foreman! My number— but honest to God I didn't talk— 7348. I should worry if you fire me, I am discouraged anyway. This factory, this shithouse— Shut up. Go on table sixteen. I thought she wants to fire me. Dope, you, the season is / here, they won't fire you now. So long, goodbye. Stupid. Isn't she a fool. Mary, you want to hear a joke? I am telling you some joke! It's a dirty joke, but so amusing, you'll crap in your bloomers. Jewish people have only dirty jokes, what is it? Once upon a time there was a man, he had a daughter, you know an ignorant, well—

Katherine, were you last night in the church? What a joke, for Christ sake. Kathy were you last night in the church? Berthy, how was it, tell it again, I must learn it. Katherine 7 were you in church last night? What the hell are you yelling in my ears? Do you think I am deaf? Don't you see I'm busy talking? What did you say? Were you in church? How was it Berthie? No, I wasn't in church! You know people are so foolish. Why should I have gone to church. Lent. Well I am not so religious—

[Quiet?], quiet— he is coming. Katherine, the foreman—Der Rebbe geht, oy, the Rebbe geht! *

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Girls, I want you to stop your noise. You understand! All the work is broken— don't break so many crackers. And I don't want to hear a another word.

He has always to say something. That son of a b—. He gets paid alright, why shouldn't he yell at us. That's why he is kept here. Must you talk so loud that the foreman shall notice it?

Toreador— oh, toreador— Mary [?] [Caruso?] shut up! Toreador— oh— Damnit, you make me nervous with your singing. Go to the opera, clean the windows with your voice. Give it to her, fat Mary. That conceited goose goes every Saturday to [?] the The Rabbi is [?] - nickname for [Foreman?].

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opera. She thinks she is an artist. An artist, the idea. Hahahahah.

So you have a boyfriend, a boyfriend— What is he? Some [?] guy , handsome, and I told him, Harry, you're beautiful. Shirley, you are a seven month baby. Why? Your brains weren't developed when your poor mother had the bad luck to bear you. That's why you're so ignorant. You are excused, don't blush. Majority of us are stupid, we are almost all stupid. Look around you'll see I am right. You are crazy! I am stupid, why am I stupid? Because you are stupid— Verstehst? Some people are born that way, it's not their fault. To tell a guy he's beautiful. That's stupid. My Bob, he is the most wonderful fellow. He knows his stuff? Of course he knows it. You think so. I know so, I am his wife. But I never told Bob, he is wonderful, I would be ashamed to tell a guy that.

I was the night before in the church. Let me breathe, move away from me. You ate onions. What a smell. Why should I go with you to church? Well, I am not so religious. I believe in something. I am a Catholic, I know it, I was born a 9 Catholic, I can't help it, but I am not a fanatic. Of course I go once a while in the church. But I am not very religious.

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I cook soup for three days, and it [?] doesn't get spoiled. It must be vinegar, only you don't feel it. Some people have no taste. That is also lucky, they don't know the difference between candy and sh—. I never ate sh—. Maybe you did, but you thought it was candy. Ha haha ha.

Somebody put his foot on the machine. Why? It stopped to run. And that stops the machine? From running of course, thick head! Who put his foot on the machine? How should I know? Maybe all the girls. But then the foreman will give them hell. Nobody home! What you mean? This machine stops every five minutes, so I say it stops whenever one touches it with his [?] feet. But really it has nothing to do with our feet, it stops because it stops that's all. You can't see the joke. Where you working, John? I push, I push, I push. Where you working, John? In the Delaware Lakawaun. And what are you doing John? I push, I push, I push. 10 What are you pushing, John? I pusha the big truck. Where you pushing, John? In the Delaware Lakawaun.

Go hang yourself with your song, I'll buy the rope for you— Do you believe in companionate marriage? That's bunk, such people are crazy. I won't lay down with a man without to go first in the church. Why do you go always to the church before you lay down with him? I am pure, a man didn't touch me, I mean I would get married first in a church and so live with a man, but not a companionate marriage. What's the difference anyway? I was in the movies, saw Sorrel and Son, believe me it made me cry. If I was rich I would to to Paris. Go to Coney Island, and think it is Paris. Poor people are fools. They work, work and sleep and shit, and drop dead, that's all. Please meet me tonight by the moonlight— Clara Bow, some red hot baby! During the Lent, I won't eat meat. I have rheumatism in my feet, but I can't complain, because the Company would give me the air. That's what you need, Mary Caruso, you'll get the air, you'll make a career yet.

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Five o'clock. Again a day. My it's still raining. Girls, tomorrow no work. The hell with this lousy job. What did I say? I had a bad dream, dirty water— [250?] [?] [?] [?] [?]